

National Security: Need for Political Control

by Brig. Anwarul Azeem Mallik, ndc, psc, (Retd)

The most fundamental consideration for defence planning is to perceive and identify threats to national security and of securing national survival. Defence is the acquisition of a plan fitted to the predictable needs of the future and the means of meeting them.

ORS: Sterling Success

Not many developments in the health sector do warrant a celebration of 25 years of their spectacular success. Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) is a rare singular invention to earn such an honour by its own right.

What is important is that yesterday's celebration received an emphatic moral boost by their presence. That two of these five UN agencies along with World Health Organisation (WHO), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), USAID and the Bangladesh government were recipients of awards for their contributions to the development and promotion of ORS, worldwide and in Bangladesh, made the celebration specially gratifying.

A simple solution of water, sugar and salt, ORS should necessarily be hailed as a most positive development in the medical history of the century. This recognition is due to the solution's enviable record of saving human lives and money.

By all accounts, ORS should be treated as a major contribution to medical research of this century and the centuries to come. At the same time it is a valuable gift this country has come up with for the ailing humanity. That cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases accounted for more deaths than the victims of all other diseases put together in the developing countries just before the advance of the ORS theory places this simple solution in a success category of its own.

All this is good enough, so far as the recognition to the medical advance is concerned. But a lot more is to be done if the full benefits of this solution are to reach the millions falling victims to the diarrhoeal diseases. People must be made convinced of its unfailing effects through a consistent campaign and at the same time demonstrations should be made of its proper use to get the desired result.

The Picnickers' Pang

The composite scene of a picnickers' bus glaringly upside down, another shoved into a ditch and the third one having collided with a microbus conjured up Friday's tally of tell-tale accidents — met by recreation-seekers. Gleanings from newspaper reports indicate that the first two mishaps were on the Dhaka-Mymensingh road.

As if to sharpen the fright of road mishaps in general, on the same day an ordinary passenger-carrying minibus also trundled after one of its front tyres came loose and it hit hard a wayside tree.

The picnic season this winter has thus begun on a forbidding note giving a timely warning to the excursion-hungry city-dwellers that they take adequate pre-cautions before hitting the road. The message comes home not only with the latest series of mishaps involving picnic parties, including the one in which a person fell from the bus-top the other day, but essentially because such accidents have become a recurring annual feature.

NATION'S security is an affair of state in which every body has got a role to play. Our Liberation War is the best, nearest and most recent example. It was not only the soldiers who fought, Pakistani surrendered to the collective might of the nation.

It is often seen that the leaders of the country and society who get fully involved in a total war, tend to leave the defence planning and preparation to the generals of the armed forces.

One must not forget that the generals with due regards to their patriotism many a time have given in to the military corporate interest. Until and unless the leaders and officials from all sectors get involved in the planning process the political leadership can not control and lead the armed forces in times of crisis.

One must also remember that it is Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin who led their nations in war. Montgomery, Eisenhower, Rommel and MacArthur were there to execute the plan.

My aim of writing this series on National Defence Planning and Resource Allocation is to raise the issue at appropriate level so that the political leadership take charge of national security and keep the nation in confidence by allowing the members of parliament to play their due role in defence planning.

The most fundamental consideration for defence planning is to perceive and identify threats to national security and of securing national survival. Defence is the acquisition of a plan fitted to the predictable needs of the future and the means of meeting them.

ONLY an invasion is likely to bring about the return of democracy to Haiti and its exiled President Jean Bertrand Aristide to office.

Aristide himself finally came around to that view when, in a recent interview with the Miami Herald editorial board, he called for military action to dislodge the army chief, General Raoul Cedras, who unseated him in a coup in 1991.

But there is little chance of military action against Cedras unless the United States is willing to sponsor it. And US President Bill Clinton is not about to send the Marines into Haiti.

One reason is the general atmosphere surrounding Clinton, who manoeuvred himself out of fighting in the Vietnam war and faces the constant dilemma of when and how he can order troops into combat.

Another deterrent is Clinton's leaning toward a presidency built on domestic issues, which explains his reluctance to become militarily engaged in the former Yugoslavia. His domestic issues are many and urgent and include reforms to health care and welfare, as well as acceptance of openly-homosexual Americans into the armed forces.

Clinton's foreign policy agenda seems to be confined to scoring successes in relations with Russia and the former states of the Soviet Union, building on the situation he inherited of a collapsed Soviet empire desperate for aid and other assistance.

On Haiti, Clinton reneged on his campaign promise not to force Haitian refugees back home. After winning the 1992 election, he announced he was keeping intact his predecessor George Bush's policy of

tion of a plan fitted to the predictable needs of the future and the means of meeting them. It is clear that all states whether liberal democratic, totalitarian, autocratic, military or authoritarian have such plans in relation to defence for a variety of reasons. Countries may differ in their historical perspective in ideological orientation, in military tradition and strength, but basically share a common methodology and procedures for defence planning.

Defence policy takes shape through formulation of goals by statesmen and systematic pursuit of expansive strategies to achieve these goals by military and civilian bureaucrats. The development of such policies involves an interactive process of an elaborate character which requires a mechanism to reconcile the set goals with the execution of policy as measured in allocated resources.

Defence planners need to decide what kind of defence capabilities are likely to arise and which are less likely to do so in the context of furthering national security both for the present and in the uncertain future. They need to identify secular trends in economic affairs and the general direction in which military technology is moving. In short, defence planners must assess the changes underway in the world in which risk, danger and violence are rampant.

Therefore, the strong point for any defence planner is his ability to understand the strategic environment.

To be relevant and useful to the defence planners, strategic assessment must be balanced. They must be based on diplomatic, political, economic, industrial and security and intelligence assessments which are seen to be relevant to both the probabilities and to the potentially critical contingencies of the foreseeable future. They must include both the dimensions of change and continuity for growth and for stagnation. Some trends will appear more certain than others, in other areas it will be of gross uncertainties of the situation, which need to be defined or described to identify certain problems.

The narrow domain of the military does not give military leaders adequate opportunity to understand strategic environment. A broad spectrum of qualified persons should get involved to articulate state's strategic policy.

For defence planning we may identify five inseparable tasks:

To acquire and sustain the ability to perform exact and predictable commitments.

No Sign of a 'Communion' of Unity over Haiti

Mohamed Hamaludin writes from Miami

Exiled Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide says United States military action is needed for him to meet his 7 February target for returning to lead his country. With President Bill Clinton's mind on other matters Washington is unlikely to oblige.



blockading Haiti to prevent any flood of refugees coming to Miami.

Last year Clinton's aides did organise a conference involving both Aristide and Cedras, which set out details for Cedras' resignation and for the

stage to be set for the late 1993 return of Aristide, ousted nine months after becoming his country's first freely-elected president.

A key provision was for the despatch of US military personnel to "retrain" Haitian soldiers. When the ship carrying the American soldiers tried to dock at Port-au-Prince, they were confronted by a rag-tag band of armed civilians, obviously sponsored by the Haitian military.

Clinton promptly recalled the ship, complaining that Cedras had failed to live up to his side of the bargain to provide unimpeded access to the country.

Economic sanctions were slapped on Haiti, together with a US ban against visits by those connected with the coup and the freezing of bank accounts. The sanctions are still in place but have done nothing to oust Cedras, who ignored the latest deadline of mid-January to step down.

Clinton's call for military action actually sparked a rebuff from the Clinton administration, which described it as "not helpful."

Aristide also displeased the US administration by refusing to attend a conference summoned by the then interim Prime Minister Robert Malval.

Washington saw his refusal as obstructionist but Aristide's position was that as the duly-elected leader of his country, it is he who must determine how its future is settled. Malval has since resigned.

Yet to calm American jitters, Aristide convened his own conference in Miami in mid-January. Cedras and his allies refused to attend but a majority of Haitian lawmakers came, as did Clinton's Haitian specialists.

Aristide made a stirring appeal to his compatriots to join in a "communion" of unity for the return of democracy and an end to the killings. There is no reason to believe that the conference changed anything or that Aristide will realise his hope for a return to Haiti on 7 February, the third anniversary of his inauguration.

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The stalemate continues. — GEMINI NEWS MOHAMED HAMALUDIN is managing editor of the Miami Times.

India Improves Weather Forecasting Services

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

System will help minimise if not prevent crop losses

Indian scientists in Western countries. Both the World Meteorological Organisation in Geneva and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts have offered help.

UNDP officials say the programme, which will cost US\$539,000, will assist other developing countries as well. A significant aspect of the UN assistance is that it will help rural female workers. It is estimated that some 50 per cent of women labourers in villages are engaged as agricultural workers. And some 37 per cent of them are cultivators.

Mounting crop losses because of adverse weather conditions have plagued the country for years. But scientists believe if weather advisories reach farmers in time, it may lead to major reduction in costs and increase in production.

Another example: If there is going to be heavy rainfall at a time when the crop is almost ready, and advisory is given on time, then pre-harvesting will help in minimising losses. This is where accurate and timely weather information relayed quickly to farmers is important.

One problem is the absence of medium-range weather forecasts. This will be properly addressed with the new programme. In fact, India's meteorological department has been issuing short-range snapshots of weather information 24 hours in advance with outlook for the next 48 hours and long-range weather forecasts for the monsoon season.

But there is still a real demand for forecasts of weather for ten days in advance. This is

what India lacks, a luxury available to Western weather scientists.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting, established in 1975, has developed climatic forecasts of up to seven to eight days in the hemisphere and up to three days in the tropics.

In 1985, the United States National Meteorological Centre started producing three-to-five-day weather forecasts and average weather conditions six to ten days in advance. Now Canada, Japan and Australia are using global weather models for their operational forecasts.

Indian meteorological scientists have been advancing research in this vital area. Likewise, a satellite-based telecommunication network will be set up to issue weather warnings which will be promptly carried by television and radio. Already, a Cray computer XMP-216 has been installed in the Indian Meteorological Department in New Delhi.

UNDP officials say they will extend support in this area to introduce similar advisory systems by providing weather forecasts to developing countries in the region through technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

In fact, India is already providing weather forecasts and warnings to Bangladesh, Burma and Mauritius.

Attesting officers needed

Sir, we are conventionally perplexed whenever we are asked to get our educational documents attested by a first class gazetted officer. Whether our papers are genuine or not does not matter, but the interrogation is that the officers do not get interest in allowing us inside their chambers. They raise excuses such as that they are very much diligent in their duties authorized by the government, and consequently, being angry with them, many are allegedly compelled to make false stamps (not unlikely) designed on several such officers or institutional

heads! One thing is to be said, however against my will, that our government has not conferred them with such obligation when they were nominated in jobs; but they have been given all sorts of liberty to do everything in their offices, very often even wasting hours after hours in unimportant pursuits. Even doctors at Govt. hospitals do not pay proper attention to the patients; teachers of Govt colleges/schools are not magnanimous in their sacred performances.

A good number of students have reportedly been punished by different administrative branches due to their falsely certified transcripts; and I like

to blame the above mentioned officers for this unwanted mishap.

So, I would suggest our democratic government to appoint some officers whose unique responsibility should be to attest the documents, and thus, a fair play situation would prevail in the course of job attainability.

M Habibur Rahman Shaheed Suhrawardy Hall, Rajshahi Varsity

BBC

Sir, How ironic! Only recently we read in the papers that just 10% of the people in Britain believe their journalists. And, in this country we

take BBC as certain truth! Any important event occurring anywhere and we go rushing to tune into BBC to hear and see what they have to say and, gullible and brainwashed that we are, we take it all in as authentic.

Do we need to fall victim to the new disinformation order under which Aided is one day a "warlord" and the next day a "faction leader" (depending on how the west wants us to see him); an Egyptian bomber is a Muslim terrorist but an Ulster bomber is never a Christian terrorist? A single nuclear test by China raises wrath all around. But 200 secret nuclear tests by USA is only a subject of passing

mention. That is, unfortunately, BBC and we are now fed 10 hour everyday with these truths!

M Haq Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Islamic Common Market

Sir, Is it a mockery as you pose to have an Islamic common market? I am asking this question because, there are people in all the countries like Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Malaysia who are giving birth to some high-sounding greenglass spectacular economic development in words and paperworks to please their

mentors' in the west, specially America, to have some medals and prizes (also capital to run so called NGOs), at the cost of real economic dev. of their respective countries.

Whatever one intends to do, may well do. But mind it that the American and European self-styled 'keepers' of democracy and protectors' of sovereignty of others will never allow you to develop an "Islamic bomb". Doesn't one see these vis-a-vis Libya, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burma? So how much practical can you be with the idea of "Islamic common market" vis-a-vis the Western 'mentors'?

M Bashir Narsingdi

Depthnews Special

cal basis for future defence structures so as to determine the balance between levels and types of equipment manpower, infrastructures, training and operational activity. In short, force expansion must be seen in the context of existing force as well as strategic environment. Such expansion must obviously be based on existing capability where already a substantial environment exists.

National defence is too sensitive an issue to be left to the generals alone. Military component is a small fraction in the overall national security. Economic strength, industrial or technological capability, foreign policy options and some other factors are of equal importance, if not more.

Therefore it is not possible for military organisations or institutions alone to evaluate and formulate a long term defence policy. For macro planning of national security in a democratic country where government can change any time national consensus is essential on key national issues. Defence is one such issue where government and opposition must have basically identical view so that continuity of long term programme is not disturbed. Can the nation expect that our leaders will keep national security above party politics?

The writer is a retired Brigadier who held top-level senior positions in the Army, including those of Director, Military Intelligence and Director, Military Training. He is currently the Executive Director of a development research organisation.

similar to the move which forced then President Ronald Reagan to agree to economic sanctions against South Africa.

The Congressional Black Caucus will play a key role in any such development because, numbering around 40, it is a formidable voting bloc and can defeat Clinton's legislative initiatives.

So far the Caucus has been supportive of this first Democratic President since Jimmy Carter in the late-1970s. But an increasing number are starting to paint the Haitian issue in racial tones, contrasting the policy of forcing Haitian refugees — "the black boat people" — away from American shores, while allowing thousands of Cubans free admission.

Clinton would have to respond. He is unlikely to take unilateral action, but might, if pushed hard enough, seek to force an international agreement to oust Cedras.

The problem is that there are so many more pressing matters — including Bosnia and the former Soviet states — that it is not known how ready the major powers will be to invade tiny Haiti.

Meanwhile, although publicly Clinton still embraces Aristide as Haiti's elected leader, US officials have let it be known that they would be happy to distance themselves from Aristide.

Administration officials have suggested the possibility of an accommodation with those who are now in power in Port-au-Prince, a suggestion rejected by Aristide.

What all this indicates is that there is still far to go before Clinton and his officials will consider military action against Cedras.

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